

Dear (...),

I think the paper is clear and well-written, and displays a good understanding on the literature, both Layne and Trachtenberg. It also offers decent critiques on both.

However, beyond its lateness, the paper is also very short. I think that is very clear in the end, when your critiques are covered in a few sentences. In terms of evaluation, the paper therefore left me with a dilemma. I think you understand the literature and the arguments well, but the paper only partially shows that. With a few more paragraphs near the end it could have been quite good even. Absent that more elaborate discussion of strengths and weaknesses, and considering its lateness, I have to give it a low grade, but one that is still a pass. A more complete and timely version next time should have a solid grade, because its seems the understanding is definitely there.

The grade is therefore: 5,5 (6,5-1).

I am available for further comments and clarification.

Best,

Paul

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Dear (...),

I think the paper displays a good, nuanced understanding of the literature, and an equally solid use of the literature and sources. It manages to integrate both the perspectives, and additional literature in a cohesive whole. It is also very well-written, clear and well-structured.

Few small points: the introduction is clear, but would probably be even better if you briefly signal (in a sentence or less) the main lines of argument of each author and your critique. And Layne is not offering a structural realist account, but a neoclassical realist one (I don't have the book with me right now, but he references it as such himself).

Given its qualities, the paper's grade is: 8,3.

I am available for further comments and clarification.

Best,

Paul

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Dear (...),

The paper is on the whole is solid, and you display a good understanding of the underlying strategic rationales of the different actors. I think you overestimate the role of prestige (which is closer to influence), and underestimate the security motive, particularly in the French case. But this is more a matter of emphasis. You actually get quite a deal of the domestic nuances and games right as well.

A major problem I have though is which question you are actually answering. I think it's the counterfactual, but then the second halve is closer to the 'acting against interests' question. If it is the former, I would like to see it written out more explicitly and with greater attention. If it is the latter, that should be clearer in the earlier part.

In both cases, you could embed certain points of the argument more explicitly with reference to the literature.

The paper is mostly well-written, though there are some prominent mistakes in the English from too-direct translations ('the question now is, had these humiliated powers => The question is whether these powers had OR, the question is did these powers have) – a bit stonecoal English, you know. There are a few more like that in the paper. Kudos on the wordplay in the titles though.

Given its qualities, the paper's grade is: 7,5

I am available for further comments and clarification.

Best,

Paul

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Dear (...),

I like the scope of the paper, and how you managed to lay out a nuanced yet broad discussion of the political role of nuclear weapons over multiple decades. I also particularly like the integration of the primary sources, and the manner in which you use these to underline your points.

However, the paper could have used a more explicit discussion of nuclear weapons as it related to the trans-Atlantic relationship. Particularly, I would have liked more attention for the issue of the perceived effectiveness of US extended deterrence, and for the question of whether Germany should possess nuclear weapons.

I found it a well-written paper, and it certainly had the most esthetically pleasing opening of them all. Structure is good, though a discussion of the NSG and the NPT could perhaps have been diminished in favour of the elements mentioned above.

Given its qualities, the paper's grade is: 7,5

I am available for further comments and clarification.

Best,

Paul

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Dear (...),

This was a decent essay, but one that had several problems, in terms of content, structure and writing.

One key element which is missing, is a discussion of the tensions over the credibility of the extended deterrence the US was providing, because it reveals a great deal about how the European states ranked the security considerations. There is also nothing really about NATO, conventional presence of the US, and the transition to flexible response from the Eisenhower administration's tripwire strategy.

The structure of the paper is not very clear, but this is also a matter of the writing. Some sentences run on or are repetitive (the words tensions and contradictions appear several times without much clarification). In terms of writing, I think the next time you should calculate some extra time for editing after you have finished writing. And, before you start writing, clearly outline what your key points are, and how you're going to argue them. Now, it gives me the impression that arguments appear and reappear without being properly introduced, expounded upon, and concluded.

Given its qualities, the paper's grade is: 6,3

I am available for further comments and clarification.

Best,

Paul

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Dear (...),

This is a solid paper, considering the fact you took the most difficult question to do well. I would have liked to have seen the first counterfactual expanded upon, specifically because you are quote from a British document, but seem to place most of the agency with the US. And what is the role of American nuclear monopoly in the immediate aftermath of WWII? This could have facilitated a rush for Moscow. The second counterfactual unfortunately spends less time on arguing on how it could work, and more on why it hasn't worked in reality. A solid counterfactual would imagine the alternative that addressed the concerns we are aware of, or most of them. So, you display a solid understanding of the literature, but that understanding does not entirely suffice to create plausible alternatives.

In terms of structure: the paper starts somewhat awkwardly, and I think the problem of alternatives could have been made clearer by explaining - in a paragraph - the conventional view, a la Trachtenberg (US reacted to Soviets, German problem, issue of nukes, credibility, etc. → NATO as only viable solution). There are some problems with the writing that more time for editing probably would have solved. For example: the first sentence is problematic (should probably have been : 'accomplished **through an alliance**' (singular)). Relatively small stuff, but distracting.

Given its qualities, the paper's grade is: 7,0.

I am available for further comments and clarification.

Best,

Paul

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Dear (...),

The paper grasps the main differences between the arguments of Layne and Trachtenberg, but I believe that it could do so in a more explicit and systematic manner. Specifically, I would like to have seen more discussion on European defence, the matter of access to nuclear weapons, and the origins of NATO.

Regarding the writing, there are quite a few unclear sentences or plain mistakes. There seem to be recurring mistakes especially concerning the plural or singular forms of nouns and verbs. Sometimes verbs are missing from sentences. Sometimes capitalization is present where it shouldn't be, sometimes absent where it should be. You also have paragraphs broken up too often, especially on page 2. Also, you should not throw a bullet point list into a paper (page 3).

I would like to see the authors referenced, including year and page, and more often. The paper is also missing a reference list.

Given its qualities, the paper's grade is: 5,5. This is a pass, but only just. Please address the issues mentioned above in the next paper.

I am available for further comments and clarification.

Best,

Paul

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Dear (...),

This paper touches upon most of the important elements needed to answer the question, but does not do so – in my opinion - in a sufficiently structured and systematic manner. Nor is the discussion of the ways in which nuclear weapons mattered comprehensive. I would have liked to have seen a more explicit discussion of extended deterrence and of nuclear sharing, because these issues reveal more about security concerns of the Americans and the Europeans than I can take from your paper. Too often, your account reads as a summary of historical events, and not an analysis of the underlying political tensions.

In terms of structure and writing, some of the paper is confusing, and the argument could be signaled more clearly. The paper also opens very abruptly, without setting up what the argument is going to be. In the opening section you also mix the various eras: from Hiroshima to ICBMs to Stalin to MAD. (How did MAD contradict containment, btw?)

I am left with the impression that you probably understand the material better than comes through from the essay itself. I would suggest that next time you invest more time in outlining the argument to make it clearer and more accessible.

Given its qualities, the paper's grade is: 5,8.

I am available for further comments and clarification.

Best,

Paul